

The Hon. Paul Toole,
Deputy Premier
Minister for Regional NSW, & Minister for Regional Transport and Roads:

Dear Deputy Premier,

Review & Reset the Moruya Bypass

The Moruya Bypass Action Group would like to congratulate you on your recent achievement in becoming Deputy Premier of NSW. We trust that we can look forward to you exercising your expanded capabilities to achieve a better deal for Regional NSW by reviewing and resetting the Moruya Bypass project managed by Transport for NSW. There is deep disappointment and frustration felt in our community about the way in which this project has been handled to date.

The Moruya Bypass Action Group represents a growing number of people in our community who have come together because we are deeply concerned about the processes involved in the selection of the preferred Moruya Bypass corridor, as well as the impacts of this corridor on productive agricultural land, people's homes and livelihoods, local businesses, the environment as well as the amenity and social fabric of our town. Over 700 people have now signed our Bypass petition, with numbers continuing to grow (see our website <https://moruyabypass.org/>).

The Moruya community will have to live with the new bypass every day for decades to come, so we believe that our community deserves the best bypass solution possible befitting the most significant transport project ever undertaken in our town. This has clearly not been delivered to date by Transport for NSW (TFNSW), so we are writing to you in your capacity as Deputy Premier, Minister for Regional NSW and Minister for Regional Transport and Roads to fix this problem. If you really care about the people of Regional NSW, you need to ensure delivery of a comprehensively planned bypass based on genuine community consultation which generates real benefits for our residents and visitors. You recently indicated during NSW Budget estimates that there was still plenty of opportunity for the community to have a say on the Moruya Bypass corridor, and we look forward to you delivering on this commitment.

The initial TFNSW "consultation" occurred just weeks after the catastrophic Black Summer bushfires had ravaged our community, and during the initial lockdown period from the COVID-19 pandemic. This was not a suitable time to ask the community to provide feedback of such long-lasting strategic importance. The second round "consultation" was equally disappointing, with the community confronted with facile answers drawn from an inadequate and flawed TFNSW options report, together with a dubious questionnaire deliberately constructed to deliver support for TFNSW's preferred option. No additional information was provided, and many critical questions were unable to be answered by TFNSW staff.

The community are particularly concerned that the preferred route does not properly integrate with the new Eurobodalla Hospital currently under development in Moruya, despite glib assurances to the contrary from TFNSW. The facts speak for themselves - in order to deliver patients to the new hospital from the north (where the largest population centres and patient numbers are located), the preferred route will require southbound emergency vehicles to drive 2 kms past Moruya, then turn around and drive 1.5 kms back towards the north, before finally turning into the hospital across the stream of southbound traffic from town. This is sheer madness when there are shorter, cheaper and better connected options available

with fewer property and environmental impacts, such as the purple option discarded by TFNSW.

On behalf of our community, the Moruya Bypass Action Group is asking you to exercise your authority and require TFNSW to:

- review the timing of the Moruya Bypass project given all that our community has gone through in the last 18 months and are continuing to go through with the ongoing uncertainty around COVID 19 and the housing crisis that has hit regions like ours particularly hard;
- provide the community with comprehensive comparative assessments and costings plus detailed and accurate information on the scale and impacts for all the bypass options and give us time to digest this information as well as the opportunity to genuinely engage with Transport for NSW about these options once this current COVID crisis has receded;
- share feedback on the bypass options provided by the community in their submissions in a comprehensive and accessible consultation report (as per the unfulfilled commitment on the TFNSW website) which should then become the subject of further genuine community consultation in order to satisfactorily address outstanding concerns and arrive at a corridor option which is acceptable to the broader community. This could be achieved via means of a Co-design Committee in partnership with the local community, a concept which has been endorsed by Eurobodalla Shire Council;
- place a hold on any discussions with potentially affected landholders until all of the above has occurred and only then undertake negotiations in a respectful, open and honest manner which fully acknowledges the right of these landholders to share the detail of these negotiations with their families, friends, neighbours and the broader community to ensure they make a decision that is right for them and their community.

TFNSW bureaucrats have already caused enormous community anger and incredulity over their management of the southern portion of the Milton-Ulladulla bypass around Burrill Lake as well as the Princes Highway upgrade at Wandanian, and community concern in Moruya is escalating rapidly over the route chosen by TFNSW for our bypass. If the Moruya bypass project remains on its present wayward course, it will deliver an unnecessarily long and destructive substandard outcome costing upwards of \$750 million, which will become a major issue in the upcoming Bega by-election as well as the seat of Gilmore in the looming Federal election.

We therefore urge you to exercise your Ministerial powers and require that TFNSW engage in genuine community consultation regarding this critical project, in order to deliver a shorter, cheaper and less destructive bypass route which seamlessly integrates with the new Eurobodalla Hospital.

In order to better assist your understanding of the gravity of this issue, we have attached a copy of our bypass submission to TFNSW. Apart from acknowledgement of its receipt, we are still awaiting a considered reply to the multitude of serious issues raised in our submission.

We trust that we can look forward to your favourable consideration of this critical issue for the Eurobodalla community,

Yours sincerely

Julie Morgan
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Moruya Bypass Action Group